

## SWOSU School of Nursing 2009 Newsletter

It has been another exciting year for the SWOSU School of Nursing. Thirty –three graduates are now in the process of taking boards. We wish them all the best on NCLEX and their new careers in nursing.

Two of our faculty retired this year, Diana Knox in December and Betty Walters in May. We will miss them dearly. We were fortunate enough to hire a replacement for Diana's Knox's position last fall. Chris Young, who also holds an education degree, taught school before becoming a nurse. The hiring process continues for Betty's Walter's position.

Forty-five junior students were accepted for the fall 2009 class. The average age for this group is a little older than the past few years. The mean is 23 years compared with 21 years for the past two classes. Additionally, more of these students are CNAs, which can be seen as an indication that they have some insight into what it is like to be a nurse.

There are 39 students continuing into the senior year, our largest class since the beginning of the program thirty years ago. We currently have 51 students enrolled in the RN to BSN program and receive daily phone calls and emails asking about the program. The online program has really grown as word of mouth travels about the quality of our program and the flexibility and accessibility online education offers. Several of our recent RN-BSN graduates are now enrolled in nurse practitioner programs or pursuing master's degrees in nursing to become teachers, administrators, midwives, or other specialty fields.

Our dream of moving to a larger facility seems as though it will become a reality. The University has earmarked 2.5 million dollars over the next two years to be spent on renovating the first floor north wing and basement of Parker Hall for the School of Nursing. The plans include two classrooms, a computer lab, two practice labs, a student lounge, plus office space. One of the practice labs will be a simulation lab. The SWOSU Foundation is beginning a fund raising campaign to help offset some of the cost. All alumni whose address is current with the University should receive a mailing within the next few months. If you do not and would like to make a donation, contact [nicole.boyles@swosu.edu](mailto:nicole.boyles@swosu.edu) If you would like to read more about the project, here is link to a flyer on the topic <http://www.swosu.edu/foundation/nursinggive.pdf>

Our clinical sites continue to offer great learning experiences. About half the clinical time is spent in rural health care settings in western Oklahoma and the other half is spent in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. The Oklahoma City clinicals offer experiences in areas not always available in rural settings such as peds, OB, acute in-patient mental health, and critical care. Students also conducted a number of service learning experiences this year. Service learning involves achieving educational objectives through volunteering or meeting a community need. Students assisted with Special Olympics, Relay for Life, and the OKC National Memorial

Medical tent. They also conducted multiple teaching projects, health screenings, and health fairs in a variety of settings. Student organizations conducted food drives for food pantries, women's shelters, and collected items for military service personnel. We are very proud of our students and faculty for all their efforts to promote health in our communities and make a difference in peoples' lives.

Representatives from the Oklahoma Board of Nursing made their regularly scheduled 5-year visit in September 2008. The School of Nursing received the full five-year approval. The visitors were complimentary about the program, faculty, and students. We are scheduled for an accreditation visit from NLNAC in the spring of 2011 and are on track with our preparations.

#### Alumni News

Towana Ernst, class of 1998, contacted her classmates to update us on what they are doing eleven years after graduation. Here are their responses.

##### ***Jennifer Weaver***

Since graduation from SWOSU in 1998, I moved to Chicago, Illinois and landed my first job as a nurse at Rush Presbyterian St. Lukes Medical Center in medical surgical nursing. I enjoyed living and working in Chicago for 2 years, but decided to move back to my hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan in July of 2000. I've spent 2000 to early 2008 living there and working at Bronson Methodist Hospital since 2001 in Critical Care and Medical Surgical nursing. At Bronson, I was involved in the hospital's Shared Governance Council and chaired my unit's Shared Governance Council from 2006-until I left in 2008. I also became board certified as a gerontological nurse in 2006 and was involved in the hospital's NICHE Council (National Institutes of Care of Hospitalized Elders) as well as the hospital's Pain Resource Nurse Program during my years there. Although I enjoyed my career at Bronson Methodist Hospital, I have since moved on with my family to Arizona in March of 2008, as we wanted to experience more of the country. Currently we are living in a suburb of Phoenix (Gilbert) and I have worked briefly in critical care out here, but have decided to take time off from working and am enjoying staying at home with our 7 month old boy, Nicholas, for the time being. Besides working and starting a family over these last years since Oklahoma, I have enjoyed traveling and spending time with my family and friends. And as of right now, plans are in the works once again... to move back to our hometown in Michigan as we feel it is best to be closer to our family since the birth of our son. I think we'll remain in Michigan for quite some time as we are realizing that moving is something that we never want to do again :) I enjoyed the drive through Oklahoma on the move to Arizona and am looking forward to the drive through there once again on the move home, and hope to be able to spend more time there in the future.

***Jeana Thurston, RN, BSN, CNN***

March 31, 2009

Take a walk with me down memory lane...would you? In May 2008, I graduated from SWOSU with my BSN degree. What a dream come true! Preparation for the state board test was amazing and crucial to passing the first time. I began work as an RN in a specialty area, due to a need in Western Oklahoma that needed to be filled. Dialysis is an area of nursing that requires patience, commitment, and continuing education on a weekly basis. I was interested in dialysis because of the technical side of it, the machines fascinated me. Over the past 10 ½ years I have always been a part of dialysis and it has been a part of me. I believe that my training at SWOSU prepared me for what I have accomplished professionally.

In December 1998, I became a mother.....to a beautiful baby boy. Being a dialysis nurse allowed me to still have the time to spend with my son. In 2000 I was expecting again and move to the KC area with my husband's job. I was blessed in 2001 with a baby girl. I had the opportunity to continue to be a dialysis nurse in a new setting. I began work as charge nurse for a not for profit dialysis company. This company serves a true mission to take care of all people who need dialysis to stay alive.

I have worked for this company for 8 years and am currently serving as the nurse manager of an outpatient clinic. I obtained my certification in nephrology nursing and serve as a member of ANNA. Looking back over the past decade I see that my training has served me and the patients I care for well.

***Rachel Chambers Dreiling***

Dear friends at SWOSU,

I feel I have had quite a nursing career since graduating in 1998 and I owe a great deal of gratitude to SWOSU School of Nursing. I was asked to give an update on my life and nursing career, so here goes! Hopes it's not too boring!

While in nursing school, I worked part time on the weekends as a Student Nurse Tech at the VA hospital in Oklahoma City. My senior year I was the Vice President of S.O.S.U.N.S.A. and I had the opportunity of being elected to the position of O.S.N.A. Community Projects Director. The fund raising project I initiated was a 5K race and 1-mile fun run held in Oklahoma City called "Race for the Cause." A portion of the proceeds went toward the C.A.R.E. (Child Abuse Response and Evaluation) Center. I remember it being a lot of work organizing the event, but I also remember it being a lot of fun!

After graduating, I moved to Oklahoma City and work for almost a year in the PICU at Children's Hospital. I needed a change and decided to head south to Dallas and again worked in

the PICU at Children's Medical Center Dallas. After living in Dallas for 8 months I met my husband while at work. He was a pediatric resident rotating through the PICU. We got married on November 4, 2000, and fulfilled the silly nurse-doctor cliché.

Eventually, I felt like I needed more autonomy and a change in my career, although always being a part of the decision making process in the PICU. I decided to start working on my master's degree full time in June of 2002 while continuing to work part time in the Trauma/Neurosurgery ICU at Children's. Little hint: Children's paid for almost all of my schooling, so always ask your employer if they have incentives such as school reimbursement. After two full years of school without summers off, I graduated in May of 2004 and promptly got pregnant. Pregnancy was not so kind to me, lots and lots and lots of toilet worshipping. Luckily, it eased up after 7 months and I was able to start my first job as a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner in the Children's Emergency Center called First Care, which is where the triaged lesser acuity patients are seen. I worked there for almost two years until the hospital refused to sign another year contract with my contracting agency, so several of us lost our jobs (approximately 10-15 Nurse Practitioners and doctors).

After taking a five-month hiatus with my son, Dashiell, I found two part time jobs in October of 2006. So, now I work with a group of pediatric hospitalists at Medical City Children's Hospital, and I do pre-surgical history and physicals at Children's Medical Center Dallas. As soon as I started my new jobs, I became pregnant with my second child. My daughter, Greer, was born the day before my 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday on September 26, 2007. Having two jobs, two children and a husband keeps me very busy, but I wouldn't want it any other way.

All my best,  
Rachel

***Mary Schneberger***

Right now I am in Phoenix with my beautiful grandchildren and my career made it possible that I can travel as I please. I started in the hospital in labor and delivery for two years and hospice . Then when the right time came I went for the job I always wanted in the health department. It is so rewarding with all the different things we do. I am not only full filling my dream as a community nurse but also I am working for my country.

***Vance R. Coleman, RN, MSN, MSIS***

Well, it is hard to believe that graduation was 11 years ago, Class of 1998. I have been living in the San Francisco bay area for 5 years. I left patient care in January of 2008 to work at an Oncology software company, where I help develop the medical content for outpatient oncology users within the US Oncology network, which is nationwide.

I worked in pediatrics for almost 10 years, mostly in Hematology/Oncology inpatient settings.

I completed a double master's in Nursing and Information Systems in December of 2008 from the University of San Francisco after 4 ½ LONG years.

I plan to sit for the Board Certification in Nursing Informatics sometime this year that is offered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

### ***Towana Ernst***

Greetings Alumni of Southwestern Oklahoma State University School of Nursing!

I graduated in May 1998 and went to work at St. Anthony's in the CCU. After one year, I began to travel nurse, which I did until July, 2005. Those of you that knew me, knew that my husband was also in nursing school (at Redlands) and he graduated in 2000. When he graduated, we relocated back to Michigan to help care for his parents. We travel nursed until July, 2005 and I spent most of my time in ICUs and step-down units. I accepted a position with Oklahoma City Community College, working for Rosemary Klepper. I taught three sets of clinicals in the fall and then accepted a full-time instructor position in January 2006. However, due to financial circumstances (we bought a home in Bethany and never could sell the home in Michigan) – we sold the home in Bethany and moved back to Michigan. In June, 2007 I hung up my travel shoes and hunkered down in Michigan to attend grad school. After my summer clinicals, I have two semesters left and will graduate May 2, 2010 with my MSN-Family Nurse Practitioner. One degree left for my 60s-my doctorate. (Associates in my 30s, BSN in my 40s, MSN in my 50s☺ From June 2007-June 2008 I worked for Fresenius doing acute hemodialysis. Last June, I hired in to a local hospital and have been working the ED since then! I have also taught two sets of clinicals now for University of Michigan-Flint. That is where I currently attend and from where I will graduate in May, 2010.

Nursing has been a wonderful profession, but it is also a calling on my life. I have worked in over 35 hospitals in Michigan, Ohio, New York, Connecticut, Missouri, Oklahoma, and California. *It has been a wild ride!* Randy and I must have made it look inviting because in 2001, Jesika graduated from Southern Nazarene University with her BSN, and May 2009 she graduated with her MSN-Family Nurse Practitioner from Illinois State University Mennonite College of Nursing. Levi (our youngest son) graduated in 2007 from Baker College with his RN. Joshua (middle son/twin to Jesika)-his wife, Christine, graduated in the same class as Levi with her RN. Ezekiel (oldest son)-his wife Christie, graduated with her ADN from Oklahoma Community College in 2008 (she already had her BS and had taught for several years.) So that makes six of us that are nurses now. I am still amazed that people allow me to care for them. Now, with the transition to primary care provider, I am utterly in awe that I go in and dx and treat (still under the guidance of my preceptor, of course.)

I still give away my scholarship at SWOSU. This year I had to be at Jesika's graduation in Illinois, so my daughter-in-law Christine went out to the pinning ceremony and made the award. It is an investment in a human life and a reward for hard work. It is also a way of supporting the nursing program at SWOSU.

My plans for the future are to work part-time in a practice, and teach at the University of Michigan. The nice thing about the MSN-FNP is I can do both! The Lord has blessed me beyond measure and I am humbled daily by His loving kindness.

If any alum wants to share professional and/or personal news items and photos for the summer 2010 School of Nursing Newsletter, please forward them to [barbara.patterson@swosu.edu](mailto:barbara.patterson@swosu.edu)

Until next summer,

Barbara Patterson, EdD, RN  
Associate Dean, School of Nursing